PETKOF THE CLOWN: A PORTFOLIO

E'BETH WILSON

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Petkof the Clown: a Portfolio
by Miss E'beth Wilson
T I School of Journalism
Christchurch
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Drawings in this book were by Lionel Hartley, Esq.

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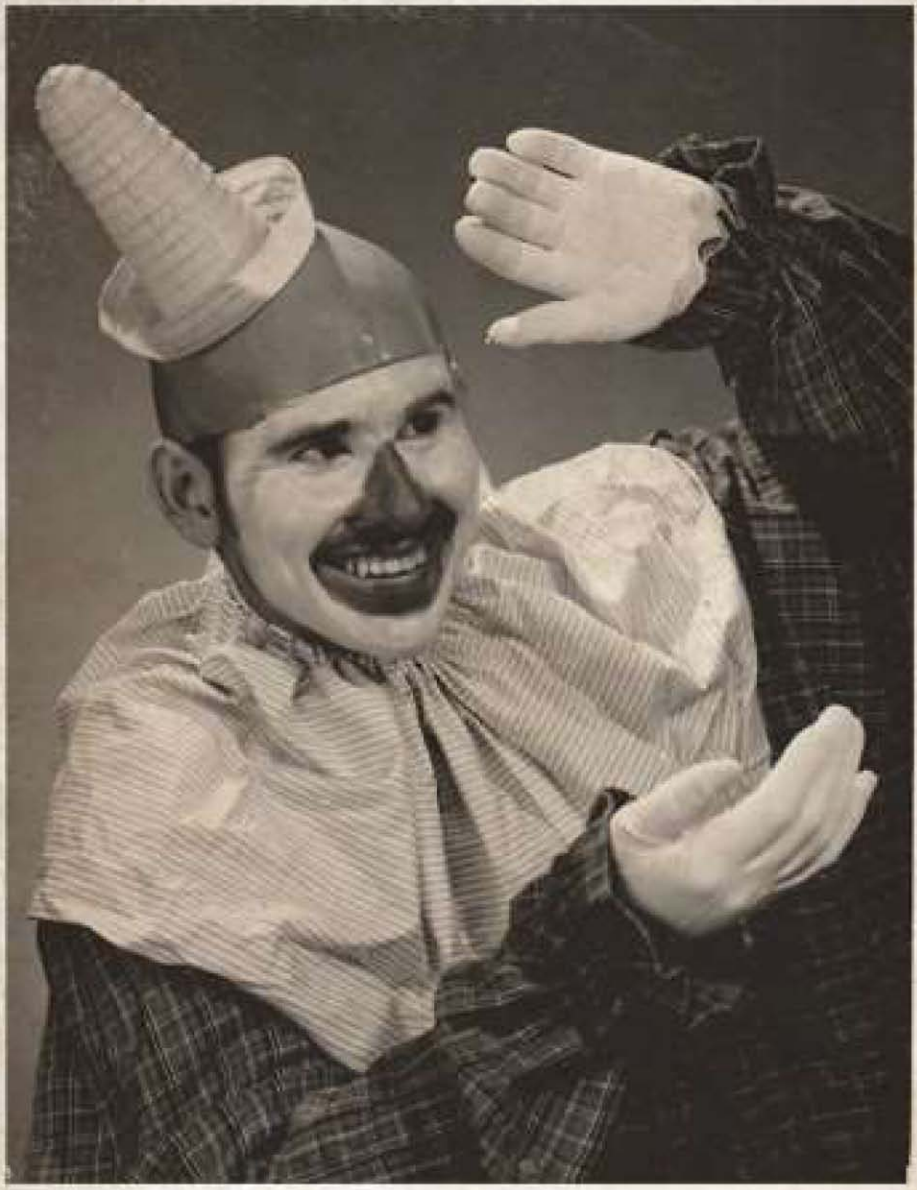


Petruska Petkof, aka Lionel Hartley, Esq

Introduction

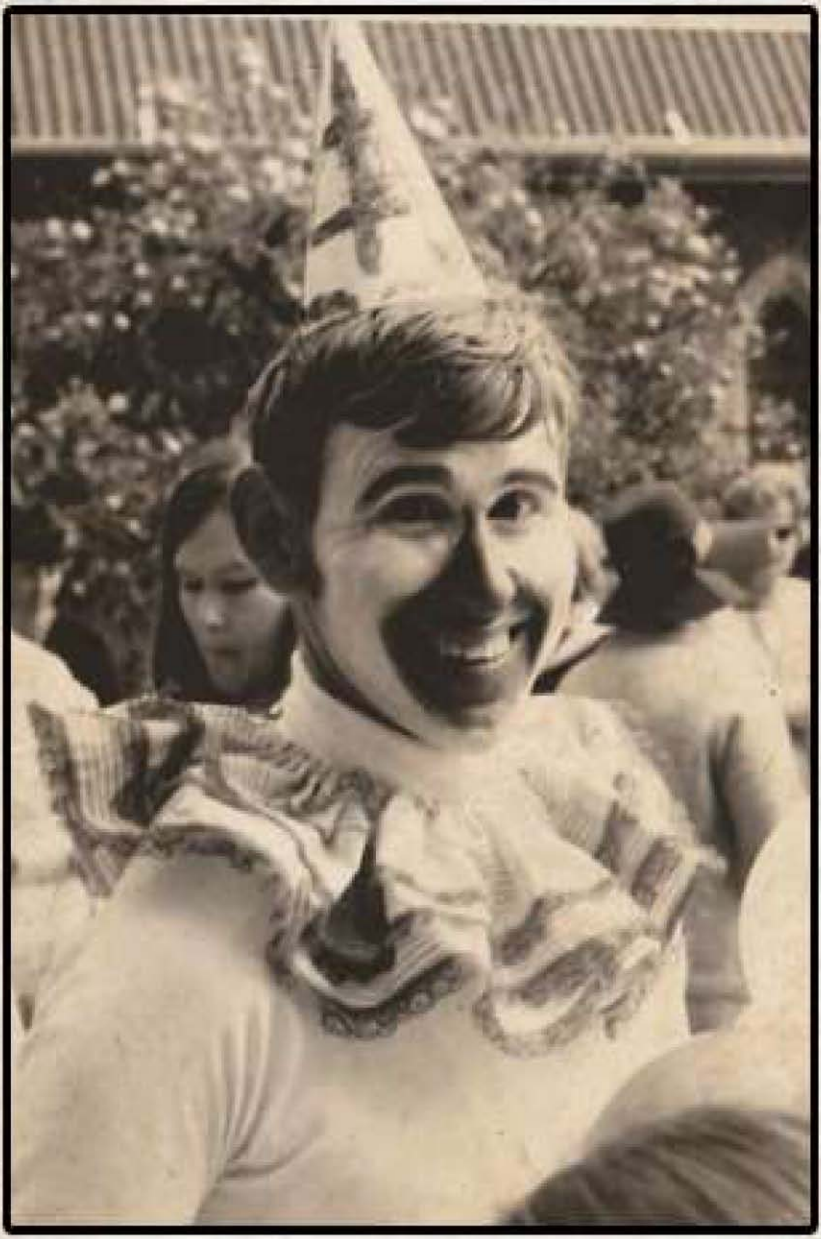
PETKOF THE CLOWN was a professional entertainer in New Zealand from 1966 to 1976.

Having seen him in action on a number of occasions, I took on an assignment in 1978 to research his story and personally interview him (more than once) and I also interviewed others who knew him.

After he graciously authorised this biography, I resourced a number of photos from news-papers and other sources and then he provided me with additional information, photos, documents, and some of his original drawings to put into this portfolio.

E'beth Wilson,
Final year student,
T I School of Journalism
July 1976

Petkof at a fair in Sydenham Park



Who is Petkof

New Zealand born Petkof (aka Petruska Petkof, aka Lionel Hartley, Esq) was trained in stagecraft at Repertory's Theatre Training School and Christchurch Teacher's Training College, and in magic and card/coin tricks by Christchurch's Milo the Magician and also more elaborate conjuring by Burns Scandrett (De Larno the Magician). Petkof also learned ventriloquism from the entertainer Barry Johnson.

He learnt basic clowning from a clown 'Loco the Hobo', and more advanced clowning, slack-rope walking, safe tumbling, gag invention, juggling and balancing from the internationally recognised clown Oleg Popov (at the invitation of and funding by a friend Michael Edgley, during the 1970s Great Moscow Circus Australasian tour).

It was actually this same Russian clown, Oleg

Popov, who gave Lionel the name “Petruska Petkof”. ‘Petruska’ being a pun on the fact that Petkof was only a youth at the time, and also his green carpet-clown costume was likened by Popov to a bunch of parsley. He was given the name ‘Petkof’ because he was a quick learner with a remarkably acute memory.

Drawing of Lionel Hartley by Colin Cameron

Lifestyle

Around this time Lionel Hartley was the warehouse manager at Merrimack Ltd and the part-time resident stage manager at the Repertory Theatre.

As Petkof, he performed at many events during his ten-year clowning career, including in Nelson, Invercargill, Littleton, Dunedin, and Westport, but mostly in and around Christchurch.

I don't know how he found the time because in addition to his full-time employment, he was also running a costume hire business in Christchurch, designed period costumes for Repertory Society Wardrobe Mistress Madge Rands, and had assembled a 16mm mobile film unit that he contracted out to groups and individuals to document audition films for budding actors, actresses and musicians.

He was also a lay preacher (since 1960) at many churches around Christchurch and beyond. As a serious and talented singer he was involved in the St Michael and All Angels church choir and performed in stage productions such as the Scouts' Association Gang Show, HMS Pinafore (Hagley High)

Also stage performances in Christchurch Cathedral, The Civic Centre, The Christchurch Town Hall, Repertory Theatre and the Christchurch Majestic Theatre.

His home-made barrel organ was a popular attraction in local band rotundas, the Christchurch Botanical Gardens and at the Caroline Bay Sound Shell in Timaru.

He was an active member of the Christchurch Tape-Recording Club, an active life member of the Religious Drama Society and a multi-award-winning member of the Christchurch Amateur Movie Club

Other Events

In conjunction with Edna Neville (Aka Aunt Haysl) he was involved in a number of events through the Repertory Society and Hays Ltd, including a city-wide colouring competition and many staged events.

He was the 'chairman' of the annual Hay's (Christmas) Parade of 1970, leading the procession dressed in a clown costume with his body through the seat of a kitchen bentwood chair. In the following years he participated in the parade riding his clowning bicycle.

He did a series of puppet shows and magic shows during various school holidays at the "Hay's Roof" children's playground, at the Nelson New Year Mardi Gras, at private parties and at church & school fairs and fêtes.

Drawing by Lionel Hartley

He also attended (to entertain, preach and teach) at a number of youth and summer camps at Woodend and Oxford.

Haywrights

hay wrights JUNIOR LEAGUER

Edited by Aunt Hayst, Roof Hall, City Store, Christchurch

LEAGUERS' MOTTO: Give the world the best you have and the best will come back to you

VOLUME 24, No. 8 OC

Aunt Hayst and "Petkof the clown" with prize winners in clown colouring competition

You could win a TRANSISTOR RADIO in the . . .

MONSTER CLOWN COLOURING COMPETITION

for the AUGUST SCHOOL HOLIDAYS!

Prizes—TRANSISTOR RADIOS and COLOURING BOOKS

Name .....

Address .....

Phone ..... Age ..... School .....

HAYWRIGHTS,
Prince Rup,
Christchurch.

Results to be published in the Star and Press on 5th September, 1972.

AGE GROUPS: 8 years & under.
9 years to 12 years.
13 years to 14 years.

Please post or deliver to AUNT HAYSL on or before 31st AUGUST, 1972.

Sponsored by Pelisol the Clown — available for hire — Telephone 53-402.

Skillset

He developed a few unique sleight-of-hand magic tricks and, although never an official member of the Canterbury Magician's Society, when I interviewed some of the older members, he is remembered fondly for the entertainment he brought to some of their meetings in the 1970s when he was invited by member Burns Scandrett to perform and share his secrets.

He was a skilled musician learning Pipe Organ from Barrington Brinson, Flute from Madeleine de la Bere and Piano Tuning from Samuel Dickey.

He could be heard regularly singing on 3ZB radio, and was a musical instrument maker (musical saws, jaw harps, at least one lute, etc), making all his own props, costumes and magic apparatus.

He also made stage-magic equipment for DeLarno's Magic Shop on Chancery Lane and musical instruments for Sedley Wells Music Store in Christchurch.

As an artist he painted backdrops and scenery for Repertory Theatre and made an assortment of props for their various productions and also for the Christchurch Children's Theatre and for Walter Pym at the Christchurch Operatic Society.

He became proficient in transposing sheet music into hand-punched paper rolls for playing in a home-made barrel organ that he built from scratch, and he played flute (and occasionally timpani or conducting) in the Hagley Orchestra.

He built an electronic synthesiser to create the sound track for a stage production in the Christchurch Civic Centre and for recording and licensing about forty diverse continuous-loop backing tracks for musicians. This synthesiser was later donated for display at the Ferrymead Science Museum.

Newspapers and newsletters of the era praised his resourcefulness and ability to draw and hold a crowd.

Some of Petkof's Business Cards

Christchurch Star Newspaper article photoshoot

Image and Article Portfolio

Some 'photos, documents, original drawings and other items generously shared by Lionel.

E FROM CHRISTCHURCH STAR NEWSPAPER

CHRISTCHURCH PAGE 12 18-11-1972

ECT PETKOF THE CLOWN

L.D.C.R.-74/200

Clowning just hobby

Being a clown is mutually relaxing but physically exhausting, according to Petkof, one of two professional clowns in New Zealand.

VERSATILE

BRIGHTON
NEW YEAR CARNIVAL
1971-72

TUESDAY
28th DECEMBER
TO
SATURDAY
1st JANUARY

V BRIGHTON
Y C E E
SENTATION

★

All Proceeds to
unity Service Projects

★

RI BENNETT,
South Island, 1971

PROGRAMME

The Printing of this Programme is sponsored by
— NEWTON DODGE LTD. —

another opportunity to make a response to the redemption.

milk production for New Delhi to about 90,000 gallons

Bigger New Year Carnival

The New Year carnival at New Brighton run by the New Brighton Jaycees will be held at the sound shell in Marine Parade.

The organiser (Mr H. Mason) said that the length of the event this year had been doubled from four days to eight, and there would be more attractions.

Starting on December 28, the carnival will run continuously 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily until January 4.

The morning programme this year is devoted to children.

New features will include a Mrs South Island bathing beauty contest, a tyre-inflating contest, and a carnival queen competition.

The Miss South Island competition, "Mr Hairy Legs," sky diving, baby contest, and Mr South Island competition have been retained from last year.

Shielded by a canvas wind-barrier, 25ft high and 100ft long, the carnival will have the usual side-show attractions.

New features in stalls will be run by surf clubs, a play centre, church groups, and the New Brighton Rugby Football Club.

This is the first year that other organisations have taken part in the carnival.

28/12/70

28/12/70

A dancing clown selling leis, takes an interest in the work of David Milne, a competitor in the sand castle building contest at the New Brighton carnival. This afternoon a hairy legs competition was held. A highlight of the week will be the Miss South Island contest.

Drawing by Lionel Hartley

Drawing by Lionel Hartley

Come to the FAIR

Saturday, 30th Oct., 1.30 p.m.

ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH

CRANFORD STREET

Auction Sale at 11.30 a.m.

You could win a wonderful

PHILIPS
TRANSISTOR
(valued at $29.95)

You must be present to win. Prize drawn at 3 p.m.

SPECIAL ATTRACTION – PETKOF the clown

*WORK STALL
*DELICATESSEN
*GARDEN PLANTS
*SIDESHOWS
*PRODUCE & SWEETS
*CAKE STALL
*WHITE ELEPHANT
*CANDLE STALL
*BOOK STALL
*AFTERNOON TEA

BE SURE TO COME ALONG TO ST. MATTHEW'S

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30th

Don't forget to bring this lucky leaflet

Write your name below and place in box provided before 3 p.m.

NAME _____

PETKOF THE CLOWN

Petkof the Clown was one of the star attractions at the fair held by St Matthew's Anglican Church, St Albans, last Saturday.

Petkof, who is well known to many Christchurch people, sold balloons and generally kept things lively at the fair, which was preceded by an auction sale at 11.30am.

The fair itself got under way two hours later, and the afternoon was a busy one with numerous stalls selling all sorts of goods and sideshows providing all sorts of entertainment.

Among other things, the stalls sold sweets, cakes, produce, garden plants, handwork, candles, and books. And a nice roppa was provided for those fatigued in the rush.

CAKE STA

St Matthew's Church Fair

Oleg Popov

PROGRAMME PROGRAMME PROGRAMME

the great MOSCOW CIRCUS 1971.

Director of the Combined State Circuses of the U.S.S.R.: F. G. BARDIAN

Musical Director:	Boris Tatishvili
Ringmaster:	Yuri Talin
Director:	Alexandr Mlokit
Assistant Ringmaster:	Vladimir Uspenski
Art Master:	Alexander Ponamerov
Designer:	Igor Radigen

The Management reserves the right of refusing admission to the performance. The use of any cameras during the programme for the taking of photographs or films is strictly forbidden. The Management reserves the right to make any alteration in the cast which may be rendered necessary by illness or any other unavoidable cause.

PROGRAMME PROGRAMME PROGRAMME

Tranlation of letter written in Russian to Petkof the Clown from Oleg Popov.

Petrouska Petkof,
I was so impressed with your carpet clowning at our circus in New Zealand thai I am inviting you to come to the Motherland and join us here.

I have never know anyone to achieve what you did in the very short time that we were together.

If you are unable to come, I wish you every success clowning in your homeland.

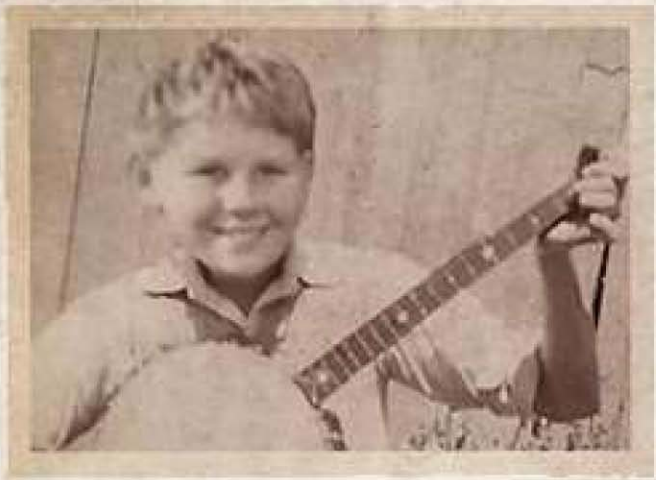
With Respect.
Oleg

Translation by Dimitri Lebedev
December 1972

Oleg Popov

Accepting an entertainment award at a Nelson Mardi Gras

Drawing by Lionel Hartley

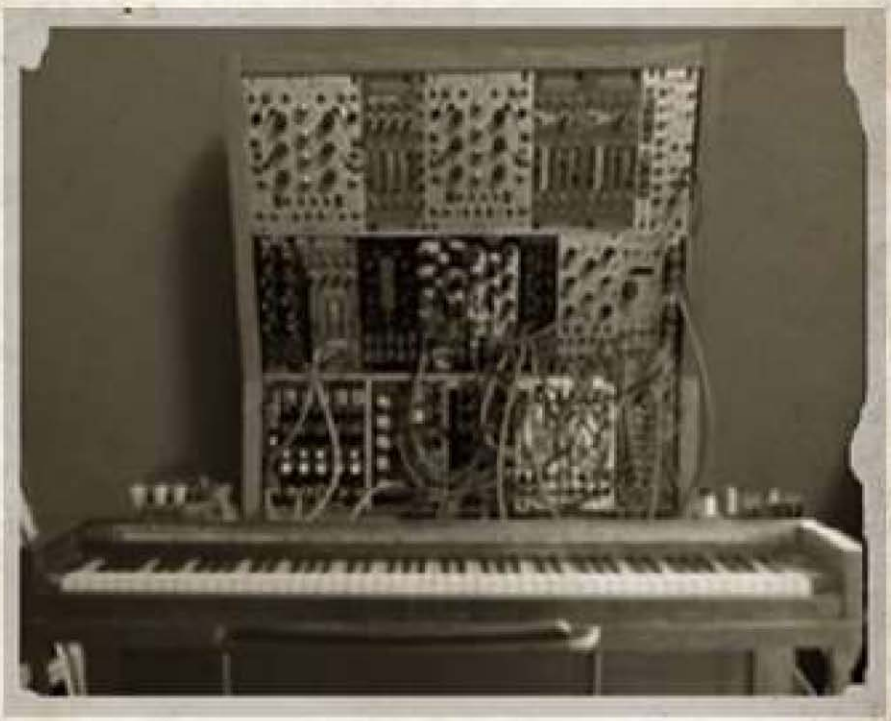


TRADE MARK
Parlophone
R. 36
Panis Angelicus
(César Franck)
Master Lionel D C Hartley
Organist Barrington Brinson

The Last Word

Petkof's decade-long clowning career came to a close when Lionel moved overseas to pursue further academic studies.

I do not know if he will ever take it up again.



Lionel's homemade analog synthesiser